

EXAMPLES OF PEER MINISTRY

“Young people are the ‘first apostles of the young’ and the best witnesses to other young people. Peer ministry becomes most effective when it is a planned element of a youth ministry strategy with opportunities offered to young people to be role models, witnesses to their peers, and contributors of creative ideas. However, they will only become leaders in their own right if affirmed, formed and invited to this task.”

(Called to a Noble Adventure, no. 25)

In our diocese, there are many examples of young people being invited to take up these roles. Young people share energy, creativity and fresh forms of expression as they give the Gospel message to their peers whilst the adults, who support and witness their contribution, receive and learn more than they would have ever imagined. Inviting young people into leadership and supporting them to take responsibility is an essential part of youth ministry.

Some examples:

Young Catechists for Sacramental programmes and Children’s Liturgy

In many parishes, young people who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation are invited to work alongside the catechists either throughout the programme or at specific times. They might prepare and lead a session, share their testimony or simply accompany those who are on this journey of faith towards Confirmation. They are encouraged (and supported by a catechist) to prepare a time of prayer for the candidates or to organise a reconciliation service.

Similarly, they are invited to work with the First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion catechists and encouraged to take a leading role. Children’s Liturgy gives many opportunities to involve young people in a leadership and supportive role for the children of the parish. Planning meetings could take place at Partnership level if there are young catechists from a number of parishes.

Whilst we acknowledge that young people, like adults, are often over-committed and our expectations need to be realistic, personal invitations to young people to take up these roles are vital and affirming.

Youth Council Leaders

Some of our parishes have Youth Councils thus enabling young people to take up leadership roles. An example is St Mary’s and St Wilfred’s Bishop Auckland. Here the members came from the primary schools but, as the Council has developed, three young people have now moved to secondary school and have become young leaders of their Council.

All our secondary schools and partnerships are invited to be represented on the Diocesan Youth Council which gives many opportunities for leadership development.

Young Leaders in organised youth groups and programmes

CAFOD have a specific training course for young leaders which is offered through our secondary schools. Parish or Partnership CAFOD Groups can liaise with their local secondary school to meet these young people. The Pope John Paul II Award scheme, programmes such as Youth Alpha and Lifeteen or groups like SVP and YCW provide further opportunities for young people to become leaders and witnesses to their peers.

The Liturgical Year

During the year our communities have many opportunities to invite young people to minister and to serve. An example is Youth Sunday when young people are encouraged to attend a diocesan preparation session and then take a lead in their celebration involving other young people and children in the parish. Some parishes invite young people to plan Holy Week and Easter liturgies.

Family Retreats

A wonderful way of engaging young adults of sixth form age has been tried and tested in Hartlepool for some years. Young people plan and deliver a weekend retreat programme at the Emmaus Village for with sessions for both adults and children. Fundraising enables families to participate in these weekends.

For more information about any of these initiative, please contact YMT.

